



The Link



First Congregational Church of Stoughton, United Church of Christ
An Open and Affirming Congregation

February 2019

Our Vision

*We are called together to embrace God's transformation of our lives and our world
by becoming and serving as Christ's disciples.*



Dear Friends,

I was surprised by the title of an article I saw recently on the *Faith & Leadership* website, "Our job is not to keep the church in business." With an opening like that, I felt obligated to keep reading! In the article, Rev. Ian Douglas, the Episcopal bishop of Connecticut, shares his belief that church leaders should be challenging their congregations to ask the question, "What is God up to in the neighborhood?"

Rev. Douglas goes on to say that too many of us are focused on the mission of the church rather than the mission of God. While church's mission is important, Rev. Douglas believes there is a temptation to maintain what the church is already doing instead of trying to discern what God is up to and how God might want us to participate in that.

What do you think the mission of God is for us?

For several years our church participated in Crossroads, an intentional process of church evaluation and visioning supported by the Massachusetts Conference of the UCC. Here is the recommendation that we approved at a congregational meeting in September, 2013:

"After prayerful consideration of the [Crossroads] assessment report and many shared, Spirit-filled conversations, we believe that God is calling our congregation to redefine our mission to bring our passion for caring ministries into the community and to find a way to share our church facility in a way that is both aligned with our mission and allows us to become financially stable."

How are we doing implementing this recommendation 5 ½ years after adopting it? Do you believe that it still reflects God's vision for our church? Does it need to be revised? These are important questions for us to consider.

What is also important is that each of us – the people who love UCC Stoughton – prays to be open to the work of the Spirit in our lives and in our church. Change is difficult, I know. But we need keep an open mind when we try new things, whether that means doing hands on work to benefit the community on an occasional

Mission Sunday or stepping up to help the Worship and Music ministry team lead a service on a Sunday when I am off.

I believe that God has many blessings in store for our church but they may depend upon our willingness to set aside our tendency to say, "But we've never done it that way before!"

So what will it be – the mission of the church or the mission of God?

Grace and peace,
Pastor Mary



Book of Life

Deaths:

Cliff Fowler, whose memorial service was led by Pastor Mary at our church on January 5.

Rose Eveline, whose funeral service was led by Pastor Mary at Russell and Pica Funeral Home on January 14.



Thank you to **Joan Roan** for faithfully maintaining the church bulletin boards and to **Carrie Sievers** and **Bonnie Bittner** for joining the Fellowship Ministry Team. Thanks also go out to **Chuck Bittner** for polishing our Communion silver. We also thank **Ed Porter** for responding to the many needs of our church building. We are very blessed!



With the Winter Weather Approaching Please Be Considerate Where You Park

Due to the limited number of spaces in our parking lot, we have signs that say, "*Reserved for Those Requiring Proximity Parking,*" and ask that you leave these for individuals who can only walk short distances. We ask all people who are physically able to consider parking in one of the spots in front of the park on Pierce Street. This frees up spots in the lot for those who really need to park closer to the entrance. Also, we ask you to remember not to park in any spot that has a "No Parking" sign, or in the Fire Lanes. Thank you for your cooperation.



Support Survivors of Human Trafficking

January is recognized in the US as Human Trafficking Awareness Month and the [2009 UCC Synod Resolution](#) against human trafficking urged congregations to recognize January 11 as Human Trafficking Awareness Day. Human trafficking, also known as modern slavery, affected some [24.9 million people in 2016](#) and is one of the most profitable forms of transnational crime. Traffickers prey on those who are in vulnerable communities and force them into labor, exploit them in commercial sexual enterprises, and move them across national or state borders against their will.

On January 8, 2019 President Trump signed the [Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2018](#). We applaud Congress and the President for signing this into law and showing our commitment to ending human trafficking. The laws enacted since the TVPRA was first passed in 2000 have served as vital tools to combat modern slavery and human trafficking globally and domestically. This recent bill will establish and reauthorize critical programs to prevent human trafficking, promote justice for survivors, provide services to victims, and increase federal coordination in response to the crisis.

While the reauthorization of the TVPRA is critical, we have also seen in recent months how changes to immigration policy are impacting victims of trafficking in the US. In June 2018, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) [issued a new rule](#) regarding “T” visas, a category of visas given to victims of human trafficking that allows them to remain in the US, receive some government benefits, and gives them a path to citizenship. This new rule states that if an application for a T visa is denied, the applicant will be automatically referred to an immigration judge to begin the deportation process. [Previously, those referrals were not automatic](#) and immigration authorities usually refrained from taking action to deport them. Victims were already facing stiff requirements to prove they are a victim of trafficking in order to qualify for a T visa. This new rule change means that [victims are now less likely to come forward](#) and report their situation.



[As people of faith, we must tell Congress and President Trump to keep human trafficking as a policy priority and call for a revamp of our immigration policies that allow for victims to escape exploitation and maintain their dignity.](#)

You can also help victims of human trafficking by donating items to fill Bags of Hope at our event at UCC Stoughton on Sunday, March 24 to raise awareness of human trafficking among youth and their parents. See the list of needed items elsewhere in this issue.

For more information: Visit the UCC [Human Trafficking page](#) and the Global Ministries [Human Trafficking page](#)



COME FILL BAGS WITH HOPE!

Help Spread Hope into the lives of women affected by human trafficking, addiction & homelessness.

WHO: Youth & Their Families

WHAT: Bags are filled with items that let women affected by trafficking know there is a better way, they are treasured and there is help. Filled bags are distributed to women who are living on the streets of towns and cities in Massachusetts.

WHEN: Sunday, March 24, 2019 ● 6:00-8:00 pm.

WHERE: First Congregational Church (UCC Stoughton), 76 Pierce Street, Stoughton, MA 02072.

HOW: Collect items in your congregation or organization to fill the bags. Arrange to bring your items to the church or have us pick them up by Sunday, March 17. Then come listen to our inspiring speaker and help to fill the bags on Sunday, March 24.

Items needed are:

- * Toothpaste * Toothbrushes * hair brushes * elastics and hair clips * 12 oz. bottles of shampoo and conditioner * trail mix (snack packs, granola bars) * women's socks * lip balm * deodorant
- * small packages of wipes * feminine products * nail polish * winter hats, scarves and gloves
- * \$5 Dunkin Donut gift cards * Notes of encouragement

All items must be new, full-size and individually packaged

Local Youth Groups and Their Parents, Area Teens, and Adults are invited to help spread some hope!

**IF YOU CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN FILLING BAGS BUT ARE INTERESTED IN DONATING, PLEASE CONTACT:
MARCIA OLSON | BAGLOLE.OLSON@VERIZON.NET | 781-344-9457**

**SPONSORED BY THE SOUTH SHORE INTERFAITH COALITION AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING
FUNDED BY UCC NORWELL MISSION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE**



What's Happening This Month?



Opportunities

- **February 3 (Sun):** Church school classes - **Faith4Life class** for middle school students, led by Mr. Russ Clough will meet in the Fireplace Room just after communion. **Confirmation class** will not meet this month; the next class will be Sunday, March 3.
- **February 7 (Thu):** Please join Pastor Mary in the Fireplace Room at 11:45am for **Lunch with the Pastor**. Bring a brown bag lunch and she will provide beverages and dessert. This is a nice way to share what's going on in our lives. Bring a friend! All are welcome.
- **February 23 (Sat):** "**The Breakfast Club**," a group of faithful men and women, meets on the last Saturday of every month at 9am at the IHOP at Westgate Mall in Brockton. All are welcome. If you have any questions or need a ride, contact Bob Kuver at 781-341-2751.



Opportunities to Serve

- **February 18 (Mon): Friendly Service** meets from 10am to 2pm to work on community and worldwide service projects such as quilts for local homeless shelters, school kits for Church World Service, and mending kits for Seafarer's Friend. You can even bring projects to work on at home if you are unable to make our monthly gathering. Many hands make light work. Please contact Janet Clough at 781-344-3860 for more information.
- **February 20 (Wed): Mainspring House:** Every other month UCC Stoughton provides dinner for Brockton's homeless shelter. There are lots of ways to help. We need 2-3 volunteers to serve dinner from 3:30-6pm – it's a great way for a family or group of friends to serve together. Make a casserole – it can be made ahead, frozen and dropped off to the church the Sunday before it's our night to serve, or make a monetary donation to defray the cost of salad and dessert. We are so grateful to all who faithfully volunteer to make meals or serve every time we ask – living out Jesus' most basic tenet – 'whatsoever you do for the least of these you do unto me.' Please sign up after coffee hour on Sunday or contact Charlene Smith (CJTS107@comcast.net | 781-254-5910).

- **Prayer Shawl Ministry:** Our group meets every Wednesday at 10am to knit prayer shawls for those who need to feel God's loving care wrapped around them. We also work on knit goods for the church fair. Don't know how to knit? We will be happy to teach you. Please join us.
- **Coffee Hour Hosts:** We all enjoy visiting with friends over a snack and a cup of coffee after worship. Please consider taking a turn hosting a coffee hour and sign up on the volunteer board to cover a Sunday.



Opportunities to

- **Bags of Hope Project:** On **Sunday, March 24** the confirmation class is sponsoring a **Bags of Hope** event to highlight the problem of human trafficking, addiction and homelessness and to help spread hope into the lives of women and girls affected by this scourge. You can continue to fill your Bags of Hope tote bags throughout February and March. We are asking that each household fill the bag with items from the list most needed by these women who are living on the streets of Boston. See more details elsewhere in this issue.
- **Yard Sale and Clothing Drive:** A yard sale is scheduled for **Saturday, April 13** (the same day the town recreation department is hosting an Easter Egg Hunt at Halloran Park). We are also collecting gently-used clothing, linens, shoes, accessories (such as belts, scarves and purses), and small household goods. As you do your spring cleaning, please bring your donations to the church during February and March. Please, no computers, computer accessories, TVs or non-working electronics. Some donations may also be given to local families in need or reserved for the church fair in the fall. If you can help or want more information, please contact Marcia Olson | baglole.olson@verizon.net | 781-344-9547.
- **Food Pantry:** Each month on Communion Sunday we collect non-perishable food items to share with our neighbors who are facing challenging circumstances and food insecurity at the Ilse Marks Food Pantry. As we come to the Lord's Table, let us share our blessings with others.
- **Bottles and Cans:** Please donate your clean, redeemable bottles and cans from your holiday events and parties. They can be left in the drop-off box at the bottom of the stairs just before the church office. Monetary donations are always gratefully accepted and the money collected is used for various church ministries and operational needs. Contact Maurine Upton for more information.
- **Needy Persons Fund:** Every Communion Sunday we invite you to make a special donation to this fund through which we are able to offer assistance to individuals in need. Please put your donation in the white offering envelopes found in the pews, which unless marked otherwise, will be placed in the Needy Persons' Fund. Through your generosity, we are able to help many people. *Thank you!* If you are experiencing difficult financial circumstances and could use some help through our Needy Persons' Fund, please speak to Pastor Mary in confidence.



Can you help?

The ongoing government shutdown is making it increasingly difficult for many federal employees to make ends meet. Any contributions made to the Needy Persons Fund this month will be earmarked for government employees who need help with their expenses. Donations are encouraged not just on Communion Sunday but any time during the month of February and may be placed in the white offering envelope in the pews or given to Pastor Mary. Thank you in advance for your generosity.



How to Find Out if Church is Cancelled

Once in a very great while, inclement weather or other circumstances may force us to cancel church activities. Safety and common sense should guide your decision about coming to church during inclement weather. If we make the decision to cancel church, we will announce it in the following ways:

- 1) *Church Office phone message:* call 781-344-2371 and listen to the recorded message;
 - 2) *Facebook/Church website:* check out the church's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/firstcongregationalchurchofstoughton; OR go to our church website, www.uccstoughton.org.
 - 3) *Email:* we will send out a Constant Contact email to everyone on our mailing list.
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Please submit any Sunday worship bulletin notices to the church office by **8:30 am on Tuesday**. Articles for the **March LINK** will be due by **February 17**. Contact the church office with any changes or additions to the church calendar.



AT HOME, IN NURSING HOMES, AND ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES
For those who wish to send greetings, the following list is included:

Jennifer Alholm
 156 Dean Street
 South Easton, MA 02375

Wayne Alholm
 149 Homeland Drive
 Whitman, MA 02382
 (781) 523-1640

Doris Bamberg
 Copley at Stoughton Nursing Care Center
 380 Sumner Street
 Stoughton, MA 02072
 (781) 341-2300

Walter Bamberg
 2330 Central St.
 Stoughton, MA 02072

Amanda Cushing
 103 Benson Road
 Stoughton MA 02072

Fred Dimond
 382 Prospect St.
 Stoughton, MA 02072

Amy Fowler
 The Arbors
 2121 Central Street
 Room 219
 Stoughton, MA 02072

Maizie John
 Bridges by Epoch
 140 University Ave.
 Westwood, MA 02090

Betty Lambert
 19 Rose Street Unit #4
 Stoughton, MA
 (781) 436-3416

Rev. Jean Lenk
 229 Old Plymouth Road
 Sagamore Beach, MA. 02562

Dorothy Dawe
 The Arbors
 2121 Central Street
 Apt 112
 Stoughton, MA 02072
 (781) 344-8367

Muriel Rowland
 92 Cedar Hill Dr. Apt. 202
 Windsor, VT 05089

Ruth Scrivens
 18 Daly Dr.
 Stoughton, MA 02072

James Williamson
 Hellenic Nursing and Rehab Center
 601 Sherman Street
 Canton, MA 02021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen	28 7:00 PM Rel Addiction	29 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline	30 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl	31 6:00 AM BRC-FR 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC	1 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group 4:30 PM Girl Scout Troop 81007	2 6:00 AM Boston Renewal Church 11:00 AM AA
3 COMMUNION 10:00 AM Faith4Life Class 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 11:00 AM Healing Prayers 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen	4 7:00 PM Rel Addiction	5 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline 6:30 PM Cub Scouts	6 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl 11:45 AM Missions/Outreach 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	7 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:30 AM Caring Committee 11:45 AM Lunch with the Pastor 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC	8 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group	9 11:00 AM AA
10 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen 3:00 PM Special Needs Bible Club	11 7:00 PM Rel Addiction	12 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline 7:00 PM Church Council	13 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl	14 6:00 AM BRC-FR 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC	15 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group	16 11:00 AM AA
17 LINK Deadline 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen	18 10:00 AM Friendly Service 7:00 PM Rel Addiction	19 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline	20 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl 3:00 PM Mainspring House 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	21 6:00 AM BRC-FR 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC	22 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group	23 9:00 AM Breakfast Club - (Pancake House) 11:00 AM AA
24 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen	25 7:00 PM Rel Addiction	26 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline 6:30 PM Cub Scouts	27 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl	28 6:00 AM BRC-FR 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC	1 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group 4:30 PM Girl Scout Troop 81007	2 6:00 AM Boston Renewal Church 11:00 AM AA



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United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation
76 Pierce Street, Stoughton, MA 02072

Tel: 781-344-2371

e-mail: office@ucstoughton.org

www.ucstoughton.org

Rev. Mary L. Perry, Pastor

Pastor's Study: 781-344-2395

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED